

Angels

Opening Historical Narrative: Filling the Gaps in Knowledge

In the late 1700s scientists faced a puzzling observation. When wood burned or metals rusted they seemed to lose something. The ash from burned wood weighed less than the original wood, and rusting iron appeared to gain weight in a strange way. People desperately wanted a clear explanation for these everyday processes of combustion and oxidation. They did not have the tools or methods yet to measure gases accurately or to understand the role of invisible elements in the air. Rather than live with the uncertainty, they confidently proposed a complete answer.

They invented a substance called phlogiston. This invisible, weightless material was said to exist inside all combustible things. When something burned, phlogiston escaped into the air, which explained why the remaining ash weighed less. When metals rusted, phlogiston was released or transferred in a way that fit the observed changes. The theory was elegant and comprehensive. It neatly accounted for burning, respiration, and rusting. University professors taught it, textbooks explained it, and experiments were interpreted through its lens for more than a hundred years. It became the accepted scientific consensus because it gave people the satisfying feeling that they finally understood what was really happening.

The problem was that the explanation was built on a gap in knowledge. Scientists had filled the missing pieces with an idea that sounded right and felt complete, even though they had no direct evidence that phlogiston actually existed. They wanted answers more than they wanted to wait for better data. It was not until the late 1700s, when Antoine Lavoisier conducted precise weight measurements and discovered the role of oxygen, that the entire phlogiston theory collapsed. What had seemed like settled truth turned out to be a human construction designed to relieve the discomfort of not knowing.

This same pattern repeats throughout history. When faced with incomplete information, we humans have a strong drive to create explanations that make sense of the world. We prefer a confident but unproven answer over the honest admission that we cannot yet determine the full truth. The desire for certainty leads us to build elaborate systems around whatever fills the gap most comfortably. We do this in science, in daily life, and yes, even in our understanding of spiritual realities such as angels.

In our study of angels today we must guard against this very tendency. Instead of inventing or accepting teachings that sound good or feel

empowering, we will stick strictly to what God has said and demonstrated in Scripture. This approach keeps us from repeating the mistake of the phlogiston theorists who confidently taught something that later proved false. It frees us to embrace the truth God has revealed while humbly acknowledging the areas where He has not yet given us every detail.

Sermon Introduction

Today we are going to talk about angels and correct some common teachings that many churches have embraced about them. One teaching that goes around many churches is that Christians have a higher authority than angels. This idea is shared to encourage people in their faith and in spiritual warfare. It sounds empowering, but we need to test it against what God Himself has said and shown us in Scripture.

Jesus showed us the reliable way to discover truth about God and His creation. In John 5:19 He states, Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing, for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. In John 7:16 He explains, My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. Jesus never created new doctrine on His own. He limited Himself strictly to what God the Father had already said and demonstrated. This principle comes straight from Deuteronomy 8:3, where God says that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. Psalm 138:2 adds that God has magnified His word according to all His name. Which means God's God is His own Word

This standard is serious. The Bible gives us a powerful example of what happens when someone listens to a conflicting report instead of God's clear command. In 1 Kings 13, God gives the man of God three specific instructions. The man of God was to deliver a strong warning to King Jeroboam at the altar in Bethel. He was not to eat any food or drink any water in that place, and he was not to return home by the same road he came on. The man of God obeys at first and delivers the message. But then an older prophet finds him and tells him a lie. The older prophet claims that an angel appeared to him and instructed him to bring the man of God back to his house for a meal. Even though this directly contradicted what God had told him, the man of God believes the older prophet and goes back with him. As a result, God declares judgment on the man of God for disobeying the direct command he had received. On the way home a lion kills him. This story shows us how dangerous it is to let anything, even something that sounds spiritual, override God's explicit word to us. Just the same with Adam and Eve as was for the man of God, saying that they were lied to is not an excuse when it goes

against God's directly spoken Word.

This same standard must guide our understanding of angels. When we stay strictly with what God says and demonstrates in Scripture, we get a clear picture. Psalm 8:5 states, Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty. Angels have delegated authority over mankind in the Old Testament. The New Testament shows a perspective of equality between angels and people. And angels always direct our attention back to God. Nowhere does God grant human beings higher rank or the right to command holy angels.

In this message we are going to correct four popular but unsupported ideas about angels. As we do, my hope is that you will gain a fresh sense of awe for God and His heavenly servants while staying firmly grounded in His truth. Let us begin with the first correction.

Main Point 1: The Teaching That Christians Have Higher Rank or Authority Over Angels Is Unsupported and Inaccurate

Let us begin with the first correction. Many churches today teach that Christians have a higher rank and greater authority than angels. This idea is presented to encourage believers and to help them feel empowered, especially in prayer or spiritual warfare. It suggests that because of what Jesus has done for us, we now outrank angels and can even command them or expect them to obey our words. While this teaching may sound uplifting, we must test it against what God Himself has said and demonstrated in Scripture.

When we examine the biblical record using the same standard Jesus followed, a clear picture emerges. As Psalm 8:5 tells us, God placed humanity a little lower than God in the created order. This verse shows that, from the beginning, human beings occupy a position below the heavenly realm.

When we consider the rank of angels over humans, the lens of simulation theory helps us understand why this order exists. Angels originate from a higher created universe. Just as we have power and authority over the simulated universes or virtual worlds that we create today, angels, coming from that higher universe, naturally possess greater authority and power over our universe. They function as powerful agents within God's sovereign plan, not as subordinates awaiting human direction.

We see this higher angelic authority demonstrated clearly in the Old Testament. In Daniel 10:21 God refers to the archangel Michael as one of the chief princes and describes him as the prince who stands guard over the

people of Israel. This title shows that Michael holds a position of real authority and oversight regarding human kingdoms and affairs. God does not describe any human being as holding a similar princely rank over angels.

Even more striking is the account of the watchers in Daniel chapter 4. King Nebuchadnezzar, the powerful ruler of Babylon, has a disturbing dream about a great tree that is cut down. While the king is thinking about the dream, a watcher, described as a holy one, comes down from heaven. This watcher issues a binding decree. The watcher announces that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to whomever He wishes. These watcher angels exercise delegated authority to make declarations that directly affect earthly rulers. They act within the authority God has given them without needing permission or approval from God or any human being.

We also see this authority in the story of the Exodus. In Exodus 23:20-22 God tells Moses and the people of Israel, Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Be on your guard before him and obey his voice. Do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in him. But if you truly obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. God Himself commands His people to obey the angel He is sending. He warns them that rebelling against this angel is a serious matter because the angel carries divine authority that he can exert as he sees fit.

In the New Testament, the book of Revelation gives us another important perspective. In Revelation 19:10, when the apostle John falls down to worship the angel who is showing him the vision, the angel immediately stops him and says, Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brothers who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God. The angel identifies himself as a fellow servant, placing himself on the same level of service as John and other believers.

Some people point to a verse in 1 Corinthians 6 where Paul mentions that believers will judge angels. However, Paul does not record God directly saying this, and it does not show God demonstrating it in the way Jesus limited Himself to what the Father says and does. That statement therefore cannot establish present-day authority over holy angels. Even if we accept it, it most likely refers to a future role concerning the fallen angels who followed Satan, not the faithful angels who serve God continually.

When we put all of this together, the picture is clear. Angels currently hold greater authority and power over mankind than we hold over them. This truth humbles us and protects us from developing a wrong view of ourselves. It also

keeps us from trying to command angels or expecting them to obey our words when God has not given us that right. Instead of claiming authority we do not have, we are called to walk in humble obedience to God, who alone commands and sends His powerful heavenly servants exactly when and where He chooses.

This correct understanding actually brings greater peace. We do not have to try to control the spiritual realm. We simply need to trust the God who created both us and the angels and who rules over them perfectly. With that foundation in place, let us turn to our second major correction.

Main Point 2: Overly Detailed Angelologies, Hierarchies, or Speculations About Angelic Nature, Free Will, or Future Roles Drawn from Tradition, Philosophy, or Non-Doctrinal Texts

Let us turn now to a third common teaching about angels. In many churches and traditions people present elaborate angelologies. They describe complex hierarchies of angels with specific ranks and duties, they speculate at length about the exact nature of angelic beings, they debate how much free will angels possess, and they outline detailed future roles for angels that go far beyond what Scripture reveals. These ideas often come from later traditions, philosophical reasoning, or texts outside the clear biblical record. They are created to make the spiritual realm feel more organized and understandable, as though we can map out the heavenly order the same way we map out an organizational chart.

When we examine what God actually shows us in Scripture, however, we discover that this approach has no support. God gives us only limited, specific facts about angels. He does not provide a comprehensive system, a detailed hierarchy, or extensive philosophical explanations. He simply demonstrates what we need to know through direct words and actions.

We see this restraint clearly in the distinct types of angels God reveals. In Genesis 3:24, after Adam and Eve are driven from the garden, God stations cherubim with a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life. These cherubim serve as protectors of sacred space. In Isaiah 6:2-3 the prophet sees seraphim standing above God's throne. Each has six wings. With two wings they cover their faces, with two they cover their feet, and with two they fly. They call to one another, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory. These seraphim attend God in worship. God shows us these two types and their roles, but He does not expand them into a full catalog of angelic orders.

God also names specific angels and describes their tasks without adding

layers of speculation. In Daniel 10:13 and Daniel 12:1 Michael is called one of the chief princes and the great prince who stands guard over the sons of Israel. In Revelation 12:7 Michael and his angels wage war against the dragon. In Luke 1:19 and Luke 1:26 the angel Gabriel stands in the presence of God and is sent to deliver major announcements, first to Daniel and later to Mary about the birth of Jesus. These are precise, functional descriptions. God does not turn them into a broader philosophy about angelic ranks or personalities.

what we do see is that Angels can act independently in the authority that they are given. In Daniel 4:13, 17, and 23 a watcher, a holy one, comes down from heaven and issues a decree about King Nebuchadnezzar. The watcher declares that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to whomever He wishes. This demonstrates is that angels operate with delegated authority and initiative within the purpose God gives them.

This limited revelation is intentional. It prevents us from filling in the gaps with human ideas. Just as scientists once invented the theory of phlogiston to explain burning and rusting because they lacked complete data, we can be tempted to build detailed systems about angels to satisfy our desire for complete knowledge. God protects us from that error by giving us only what He has said and has demonstrated.

This correction matters. When we accept overly detailed angelologies, we risk treating speculation as truth and shifting our focus away from the truth of God's Word. It also distracts us from the clear facts God has given us. Instead of wondering about unmentioned hierarchies or future roles, we are free to stand in awe of what God has shown: angels are powerful, obedient servants who praise Him, deliver His messages, protect His people, and execute their purpose within the authority they are given.

This keeps our doctrine clean and our worship centered on the Creator. With this clear understanding in place, let us move to our final major correction.

Main Point 3: There Is No Biblical Basis for Praying to Angels, Invoking Them, or Treating Them as Intercessors

Let us turn now to a fourth common teaching about angels. In some churches and traditions, people are encouraged to pray directly to angels, invoke their help, or treat them as intercessors who can carry our requests to God. This practice is sometimes presented as a way to access extra spiritual support or to involve heavenly beings more actively in our lives. It may feel spiritual or respectful, as though we are honoring the angels by including them in our prayers.

When we examine what God actually shows us in Scripture, however, we discover that this teaching has no support. Nowhere in the biblical record does God demonstrate or command that human beings should pray to angels, invoke them, or treat them as intermediaries. Instead, the consistent pattern is that angels always redirect attention and worship back to God alone, and humans never initiate contact with them. Angels arrive unbidden at God's command, never in response to human summons or requests.

A clear example of this pattern comes in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 19:10 the apostle John is overwhelmed by what the angel is showing him about the future, and he falls down at the angel's feet to worship him. The angel immediately stops him and says, Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brothers who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God. Later, in Revelation 22:8-9, John makes the same mistake again. He falls down to worship the angel who has been guiding him through the visions. Once more the angel corrects him with the exact same words, Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brothers the prophets and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God. In both cases the angel refuses any form of special attention or prayerful posture. He identifies himself as a fellow servant on the same level as John and other believers, and he points every bit of honor and worship straight to God. This is not a minor detail. God includes these scenes to show us exactly how angels respond when anyone tries to give them the kind of attention that belongs only to God.

Throughout the rest of Scripture the same principle holds. In every account where angels appear to people, whether to announce Jesus' birth, to strengthen Him in the garden, to rescue Peter from prison, or to direct Philip to the Ethiopian official, the angels come on God's initiative alone. No one prays to them first. No one invokes their names. No one asks them to intercede. They simply show up when God sends them, deliver His message, perform His task, and then depart.

This truth connects directly to the way God teaches us to pray. In the Lord's Prayer, which Jesus gives us in Matthew 6:9-13, He instructs us to address God the Father directly. The entire model of prayer in Scripture is one of coming boldly to God Himself, not routing our requests through created beings.

This correction is important for several reasons. First, it protects the purity of our relationship with God. When we start directing prayers to angels, we risk shifting our focus away from the Creator and onto His creatures. Second, it keeps us from repeating the mistake illustrated in the story of the man of God in 1 Kings 13. As we saw earlier, that man of God received a clear, direct command from God but later believed a conflicting report about an angel and

disobeyed. God held him accountable for choosing the wrong voice. In the same way, when we add practices like praying to angels that God has never commanded or demonstrated, we open ourselves to the same danger. Third, this truth frees us to pray with confidence. We do not need to wonder whether we are using the right words to summon heavenly help. We simply come to the Father who loves us and who is perfectly able to send His angels exactly when and where they are needed.

The truth is both humbling and liberating. Angels are powerful and wonderful servants of God, but they are not objects of our prayers or invocations. Their role is to glorify God and serve His purposes, and they consistently point us back to Him. This keeps our worship clean and our faith focused where it belongs.

Conclusion: Facts We Can Confirm About Angels from Scripture

With these four corrections now clearly in place, let us close by focusing on what we can confidently affirm about angels from what God Himself has said and demonstrated in Scripture. When we stay strictly with the biblical record in the Old Testament, the Gospels, the book of Acts, and the book of Revelation, a beautiful and consistent picture emerges. These are not speculations or traditions. These are facts God has shown us directly. Let me walk you through them one at a time so they settle deeply into your heart.

First, angels are created spiritual beings who existed before the physical world and rejoiced at its creation. In the book of Job, God Himself describes this moment. He asks Job, Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Job 38:4-7. The angels, called sons of God in this passage, were already present as eyewitnesses. They celebrated with singing and shouting when God brought the universe into being. This fact reminds us that angels belong to a higher created order and have witnessed God's power from the very beginning.

Second, angels frequently serve as messengers delivering God's direct words, commands, or announcements to people. Time after time God sends them with precise instructions. The angel of the Lord appears to Hagar in the wilderness and tells her she will bear a son named Ishmael because God has heard her affliction. Genesis 16:7-13. The same angel stops Abraham from sacrificing Isaac and swears an oath in God's name. Genesis 22:11-18. In Exodus 3:2-6 the angel calls to Moses from the burning bush and declares the ground holy because of God's presence. In the New Testament the angel

Gabriel stands in God's presence and announces to Mary that she will conceive Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Luke 1:26-38. These are not vague impressions. They are clear, authoritative messages straight from God.

Third, angels act as protectors and guardians at God's command. God promises the nation of Israel in Exodus 23:20, Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. In the Psalms God declares that the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him and delivers them. Psalm 34:7. After Adam and Eve's disobedience, God stations cherubim with a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life. Genesis 3:24. In Daniel 6:22 an angel shuts the lions' mouths to protect Daniel through the night. These acts of protection are always initiated by God for His purposes.

Fourth, angels can appear in human-like form or with glorious, awe-inspiring appearances that cause fear. In Genesis 18 three men visit Abraham. Two of them are later identified as angels, and they eat a meal with him before continuing on to Sodom. Genesis 19:1-11. At Jesus' resurrection the angel who rolls back the tomb stone has an appearance like lightning and clothing white as snow, causing the guards to shake with fear and become like dead men. Matthew 28:2-4. In Acts 12:7 an angel appears to Peter in prison with a light shining in the cell. These appearances are never ordinary. They remind us that we are encountering heavenly beings sent by God.

Fifth, angels execute God's judgments and carry out destruction when commanded. Two angels rescue Lot from Sodom and then bring sulfur and fire on the cities after declaring that the outcry against them has reached God. Genesis 19:12-25. In 2 Kings 19:35 an angel strikes down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night as judgment on their arrogance. In Acts 12:23 the angel of the Lord strikes Herod dead because he accepted praise that belonged only to God.

Sixth, angels provide strength, direction, and rescue in times of crisis. In Luke 22:43 an angel strengthens Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane during His agony. In Acts 5:19 an angel opens the prison doors at night and leads the apostles out with instructions to keep teaching. In Acts 12:6-10 the angel frees Peter from chains between sleeping soldiers, leads him through iron gates, and vanishes once he is safe. In Acts 8:26 an angel directs Philip to the desert road where he meets the Ethiopian official. In Acts 27:23-24 an angel stands beside Paul in the storm and assures him that everyone on the ship will be saved.

Seventh, angels announce and celebrate major redemptive events. An angel appears to the shepherds with the glory of the Lord shining around them and

announces Jesus' birth. A great company of the heavenly host then joins in praising God. Luke 2:8-14. Angels appear at the empty tomb to announce the resurrection to the women. Matthew 28:5-7, Luke 24:4-7. In Revelation 5:11-12 myriads of angels surround the throne singing, Worthy is the Lamb.

Eighth, angels praise, worship, and serve God continually in heaven. In Isaiah 6:2-3 the prophet sees seraphim above God's throne crying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts. In Revelation 4:8-11, 5:8-14 and 7:11-12 countless angels fall down before the throne in unending worship.

Ninth, there are distinct ranks, types, and named angels with specific roles. Cherubim guard sacred spaces. Genesis 3:24. Seraphim attend God's throne. Isaiah 6. Michael the archangel contends with the devil and leads angelic forces. Daniel 10:13, 12:1, Revelation 12:7. Gabriel stands in God's presence and delivers major announcements. Luke 1:19, 1:26.

Tenth, angels do not marry or reproduce and are distinct from humans in nature. Jesus teaches in Matthew 22:30, For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

Finally, angels are holy, obedient servants who observe and participate in God's plan without ever being objects of worship. In Revelation 19:10 and 22:8-9 the angel corrects John twice with the words, Do not do that. Worship God.

These facts, drawn straight from what God has shown us, leave us with a clear and awe-inspiring picture. Angels are powerful, obedient heavenly servants who operate with delegated authority in God's sovereign plan. They do not belong to us. They belong to Him. They do not wait for our commands. They wait for His. And every time they appear, they point us back to the God who created them, who commands them, and who alone is worthy of our worship.

This is the truth that sets us free. It humbles us, protects us from false teachings, and fills us with fresh wonder at the God who rules both heaven and earth. Let us respond today by trusting Him completely, obeying His word without compromise, and joining the angels in giving Him all the glory. Amen.